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STAR WARS™

THE OFFICIAL STARSHIPS & VEHICLES COLLECTION

THE AT-AT 4

General Veers' assault vehicle

Inside Dexter's Diner

The Battle of Hoth

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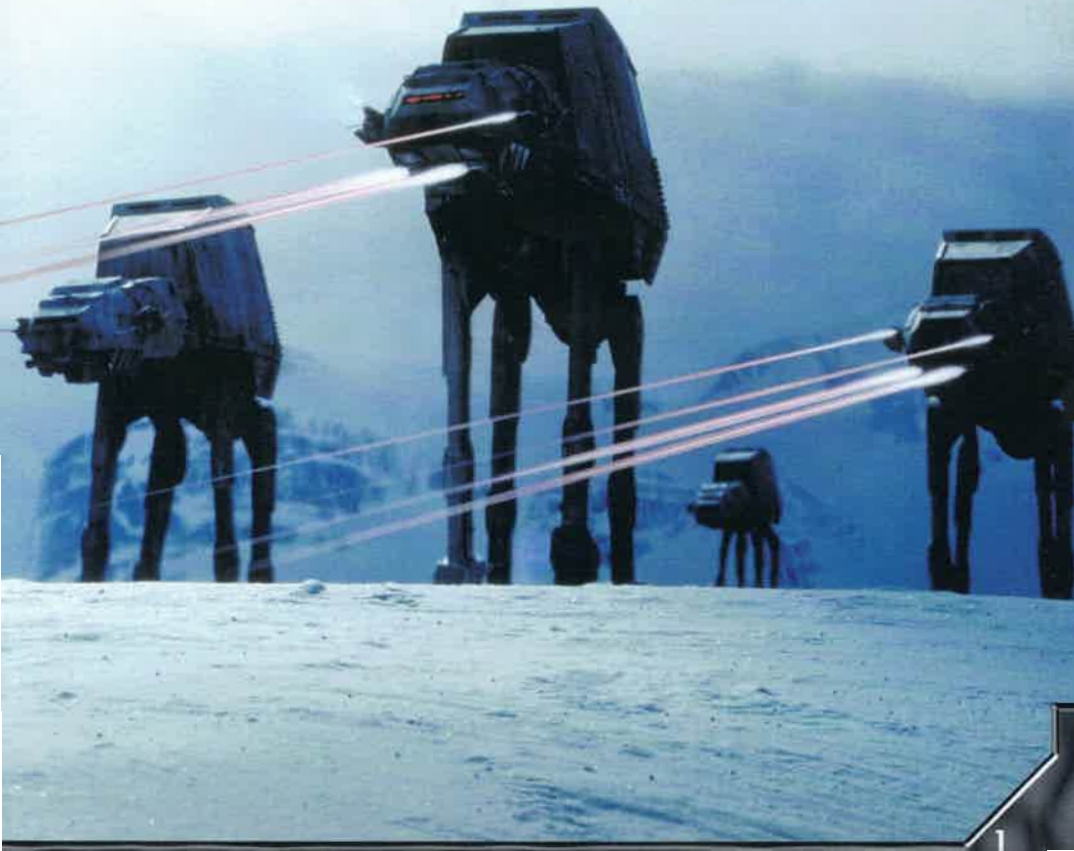
STAR WARS

One of the most terrifying military vehicles ever built, the All Terrain Armoured Transport is designed to transport Imperial troops through occupied territory. A unit of AT-ATs, modified for the extreme cold, led the assault on the Rebel base on Hoth, inflicting one of the most damaging defeats the Rebellion ever suffered.

'IMPERIAL WALKERS ON THE NORTH RIDGE.'

– REBEL CONTROLLER



AT-AT

ALL TERRAIN ARMOURED TRANSPORT

The AT-AT is not a conventional piece of battlefield technology. There are quicker ways to deploy troops to the battlefield, and more focused ways to deal with enemy infantry, vehicles and entrenched positions. The AT-AT, however, is an Imperial weapon, a product of the Empire's doctrine of rule by fear.

Standing 15 metres in height, the AT-AT is a monstrous instrument of terror. Impervious to conventional weapons, the psychological effect of the inexorable advance of a unit of these deadly behemoths cannot be understated. Once in weapons range, the light blasters mounted on each side of the head and the heavy cannon slung under the 'chin' give this beast a considerable bite.

The AT-AT had its origins in weapons used by the Old Republic during the Clone Wars. The AT-TE walker performed well on Geonosis during the opening engagement of the Clone Wars and was soon joined by other walkers, including the AT-RT – forerunner of the AT-ST.

Many years later, Imperial General Maximilian Veers demonstrated the value of the walker to the Imperial Army time and again. Notably, the AT-ATs of his Blizzard Force all but crushed the Rebel forces during the Battle of Hoth. The rout would have been complete but for the bravery and heroic sacrifice of Rogue Squadron.

In The Belly Of The Beast

While the AT-AT is a combat vehicle in its own right, it also serves to carry troops and equipment into battle. Unless operating from an Imperial base, AT-ATs are deployed to the surface of a planet in specially constructed barges – usually the Y-85 Titan dropship. To deploy its complement of troops, an AT-AT must kneel. With the body still three metres from the ground,

ramps are lowered for the 40 troops and four speeder bikes to disembark. It is also possible for the troopers to rappel down drop lines from the AT-AT, though they are very vulnerable doing so.

Chinks In The Armour

Despite its immense height and 20-metre length, and despite its impressive weapons, great, crushing feet, thick armour and 60 km/h top speed on open, flat ground, an AT-AT is not invulnerable. It lacks armour plating in key areas, including its neck and belly. An infantry unit, armed with appropriate heavy firepower, that can survive to get under an AT-AT, can destroy it with well-placed or lucky shots. For this reason, AT-ATs are usually teamed with far smaller AT-STs to protect the lumbering giants from this possibility.

Mass Production

AT-ATs were manufactured by Kuat Drive Yards and at a number of other secret locations. They were mass produced at a dizzying pace. Every Imperial class Star Destroyer in the Imperial fleet carried at least 20 of them. Larger or significant ground bases normally had a full platoon of four AT-ATs operating in shifts. The first Death Star had thousands of AT-ATs, waiting to be deployed on any world that the Empire wanted to subdue, rather than wipe out with the battle station's superlaser.

INTO THE ATTACK!

ASSAULT ON ECHO BASE

The Battle of Hoth was, on paper, one of the worst defeats inflicted on the Rebel Alliance by the Empire. In fact, it could have been far worse, but for the heroics of Rogue Squadron and two key errors made by the Imperials.

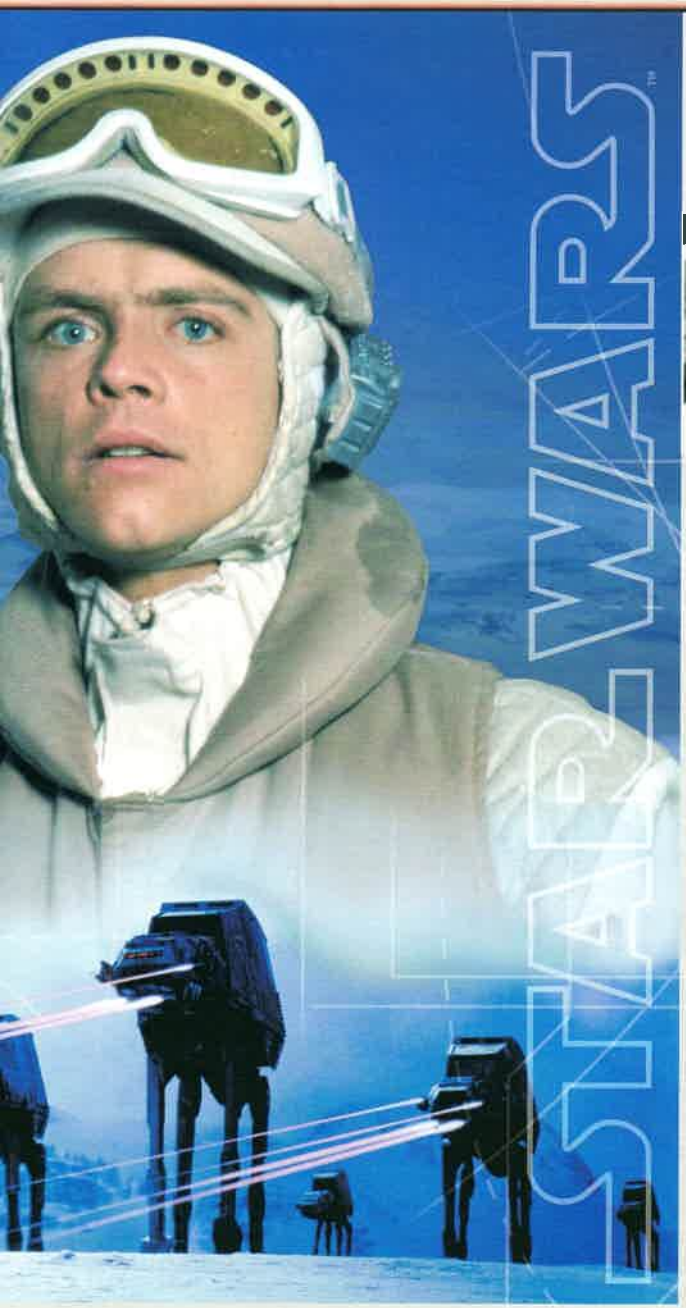
After the Battle of Yavin, and the Rebels' subsequent escape from the Imperial blockade, the Empire hounded the Rebels continually. But as Luke fled from an Imperial patrol, he stumbled upon the ice world of Hoth – an Outer Rim planet whose climate meant that it was ignored by all but the most desperate smugglers and pirates.

Rebel Luck

The Rebels immediately saw the potential of Luke's discovery and decided to establish their main base there. Carved out of ice and rock, Echo Base was still being established and stocked when it was discovered by Imperial probe droids sent out on the orders of Darth Vader. Ironically, the main command personnel – including Rebel leader Mon Mothma – had not yet been moved to Echo Base.

The Error Of Arrogance

Even as it was, if the Empire had achieved total victory on Hoth, the damage to the Alliance would still have been catastrophic. However, the Imperials' first error was made by Admiral Ozzel, who followed an old shock-and-awe tactic, coming out of hyperspace close to the planet. This allowed the Rebels to



'That armour's too strong for blasters. Rogue Group, use your harpoons and tow cables. Go for the legs. It might be our only chance of stopping them.'

Rogue Leader, Commander Luke Skywalker

detect the fleet's hyperspace 'bow wave' and activate a defence shield. Ozzel expected a logical surrender, not opponents ready to fight.

The second error was General Veers'. He expected his AT-ATs to be unstoppable. Instead, he lost three to Rogue Squadron and a fourth to Dash Rendar. The delay allowed the majority of the Rebels to escape the blockade, covered by a surface-based ion cannon capable of crippling a Star Destroyer.

GENERAL VEERS
THE PERFECT IMPERIAL SOLDIER

In his rise to power, Emperor Palpatine and his agents made many promises to the old commanders of military forces across the galaxy to gain their loyalty. However, Palpatine was also grooming a new wave of young officers who knew no doctrine other than the Imperial way. Maximilian Veers was just such a man.

Tough, uncompromising, disciplined and cold. Veers was the perfect Imperial officer. He first came to Darth Vader's attention after rescuing his commanding officer on the planet Culroon III. The commander had sought to understand and work with the natives of the conquered world. In turn, they attempted to kidnap him. Veers marched his AT-AT into the situation, wiped out the insurgents, rescued his commander, and went on to demonstrate why the natives should never again defy the Empire.

Vader's General

As a reward for his daring, Veers was promoted to command the ground forces attached to Lord Vader's Death Squadron – a personal fleet group engaged in hunting down the Rebel Alliance. As an example of the new, younger Imperial officer, he frequently clashed with the traditionalist Admiral Ozzel, but Vader backed Veers each time.

At the Battle of Hoth, Veers led from the front in *Blizzard 1* – his personal

PROFILE

Affiliation
Empire
Species
Human
Height
1.93 metres
Vehicle
AT-AT
Appearance
Episode V

'Comscan has detected an energy field protecting an area of the sixth planet of the Hoth system.' General Maximilian Veers

AT-AT. It was better armed and armoured than the others in the assault group, all of which had been modified against the cold. Veers himself targeted the Rebel generators and ordered their destruction. Shortly before doing so, he contacted Darth Vader to inform him that he could begin landing the troops for the main assault.

Rogue Squadron Fights Back

At no stage did General Veers ever doubt his ultimate success on Hoth, although the delays he encountered thanks to the brave efforts of Rogue Squadron's snowspeeders did allow the vast majority of the Rebel personnel to escape.

Veers' Blizzard Force was an elite Imperial unit, highly trained and motivated. All that the Alliance had to throw against the best the Empire could field was a rag-tag group of veterans and rookies flying newly modified, barely tested T-47 airspeeders, led by a wannabe Jedi Knight. This was the Rebels' Rogue Squadron.

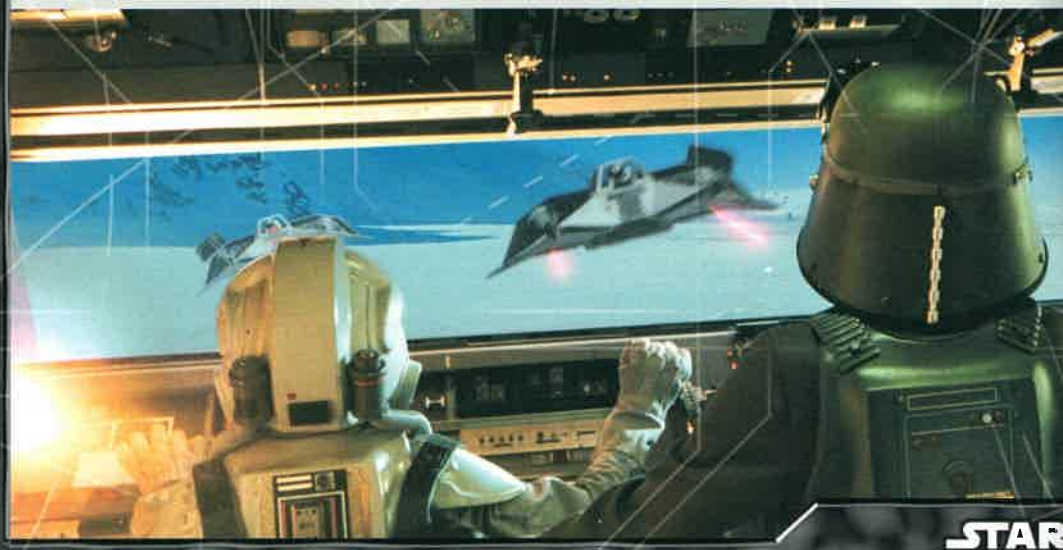
An initial pass revealed exactly what the Rogues feared – that their blasters could not dent the AT-AT armour. At Luke Skywalker's suggestion, they used the snowspeeders' magnetic harpoon towing gear and attacked the walkers' legs. Wedge Antilles was the first to bring down an AT-AT in this way.

Rebel Evacuation

As Rogue Squadron battled Blizzard Force, the remainder of the Rebel personnel rushed to escape Echo Base and the Imperial blockade of Hoth. This was no mad scramble, though it might have looked a little like it. In fact, after years of being pursued by the Empire, the Rebels were well prepared. They had been drilled in just what to do when the evacuation order was given. Loaded transports were protected by one or two fighters each, but the real escape cover came from the planetary defender ion cannon. Its blasts brushed aside even Imperial capital ships.

Ultimately, as the Imperials closed in, the last transports went out in twos – a risky tactic. One, the *Bright Hope*, was crippled by the Empire's blockading vessels but was rescued by bounty hunters Zuckuss

'Yes, Lord Vader. I've reached the main power generators. The shield will be down in moments.' General Maximilian Veers



Return of Veers?

In a scene preserved in the original novelisation of *The Empire Strikes Back*, General Veers was killed when a damaged snowspeeder collided with his walker's cockpit. The scene was never filmed, so Veers survived. The character turned up again in an early draft of *Return of the Jedi*, but was not used beyond this point.

and 4-LOM, whose real aim was to infiltrate the Alliance to track Han Solo.

Terrible Losses

Though the Alliance evacuated Hoth as best it could, the defeat inflicted heavy losses in manpower and heavy equipment. The Alliance remained undermanned for the rest of the civil war. What was left of the Rebel force became mobile once again, with its command centred around Alliance starships.

A year later, they were forced to take a desperate gamble when spies revealed the existence of a new Death Star station, still under construction. The end result was the climactic Battle of Endor.

The End Of Veers?

Maximilian Veers was a true survivor. He had been one of the few Imperials to survive the destruction of the first Death Star, having understood the purpose of the Rebel attack. Politically, he also survived the defection of his son, Zevulon, to the Rebel Alliance not long after the victory at Hoth.

After Endor, not much is known about Veers, although it is thought that he died during the Battle of Balmorra. However, with someone as capable and ruthless as Veers, it is impossible to be quite sure.

AT-AP
THE ALL TERRAIN ATTACK POD

The Clone Wars taught harsh lessons to commanders on both sides of the confict. Weaknesses in any area of the battlefield were quickly exploited by the enemy. Separatist tacticians identified a 'hole' in their battle plans, and filled it with the All Terrain Attack Pod.

The ability to react to the ever-changing dynamic of a battle is a key strength in any army. The initial flurries of conflict early in the Clone Wars led to the development of a medium-range artillery piece – a scaling-up of the successful AT-PT (All Terrain Personal Transport) walkers. The intention had been to create a two-man model, though the Attack Pod walker actually carried a third crewman to operate the top-mounted cannon.

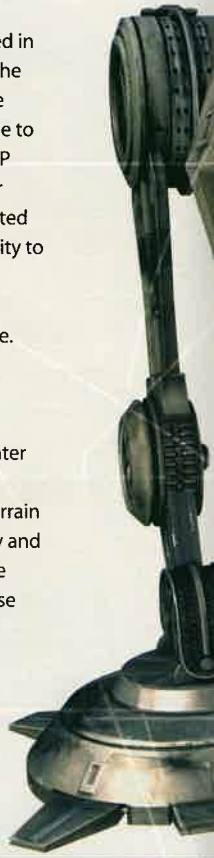
Multiple Functions

On simple, relatively easy terrain, the AT-AP strode forth on two legs. A third, slung under the body, was deployed in more challenging terrain or when the main mass-driver cannon was to be fired. Despite weapons systems able to deal with infantry attacks, the AT-AP was relatively vulnerable to heavier weapons, and was normally protected by tanks. For commanders, the ability to redeploy and target medium field artillery quickly made this extra investment of resources worthwhile.

Ubiquitous Technology

The AT-AP was manufactured by Rothana Heavy Engineering (and later by Kuat Drive Yards), using some components from the AT-TE (All Terrain Tactical Enforcer) for ease of supply and maintenance. So successful was the machine that AT-APs were still in use during the Galactic Civil War.

Abandoned AT-AP factories were reactivated by both Imperials and Rebels, and even by some independent operators. As a result, even some Hutt organisations can field these fearsome machines.



AT-AP Profile

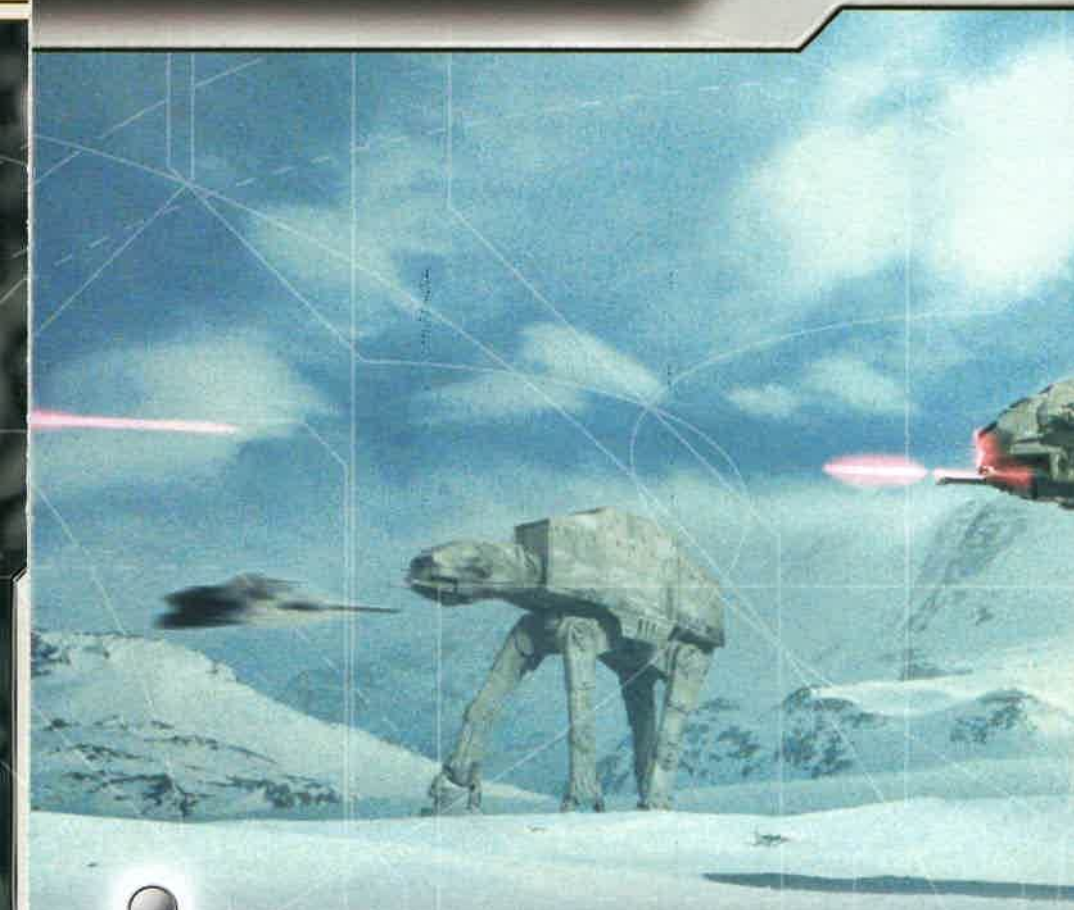
Height
10.97 metres

Manufacturer
Rothana Heavy Engineering/ Kuat Drive Yards

Class
Walker – medium artillery

Armament
Heavy mass-driver cannon, heavy blaster cannon, medium laser cannon

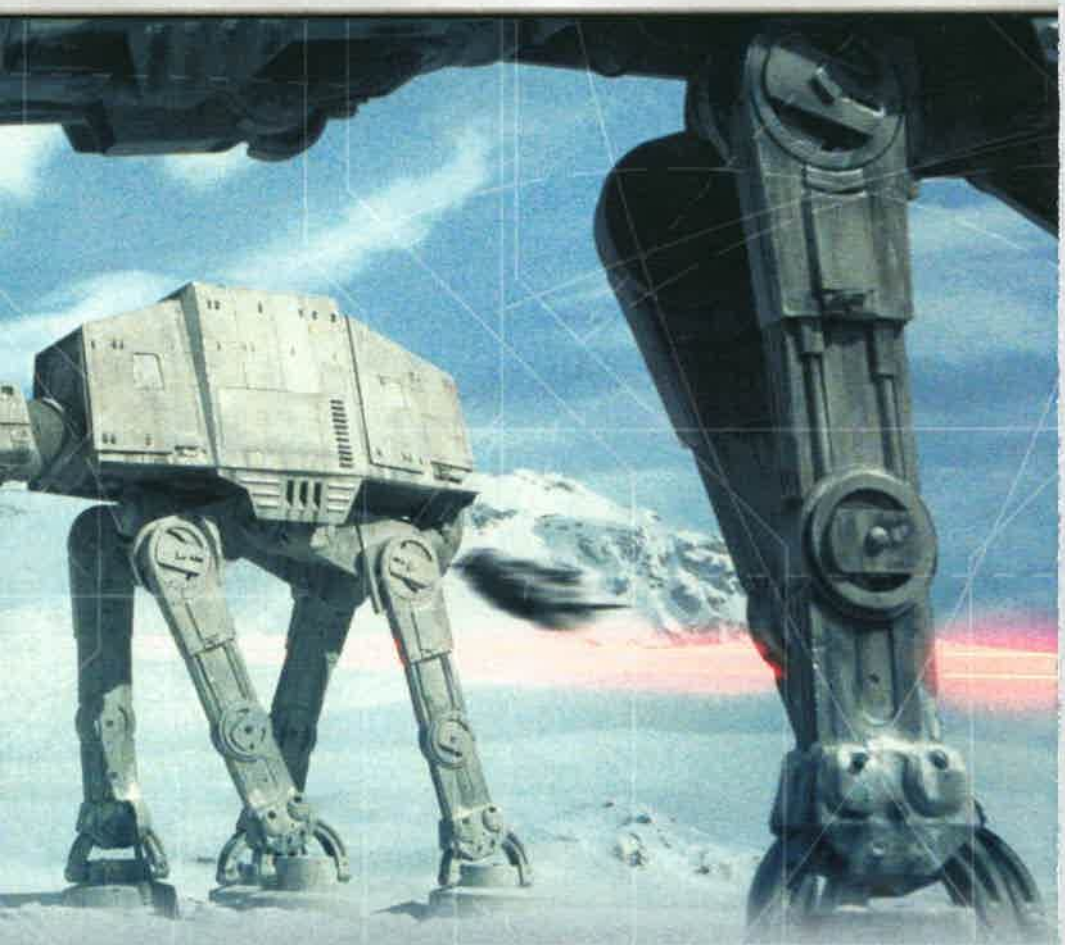
Affiliation
Republic



AT-AT

AT THE BATTLE OF HOTH

Hoth is the sixth planet in a far distant star system of the same name. In this inhospitable world of snow and ice, it is essential to wear protective clothing at all times, and even vehicles and equipment suffer from the extreme cold. On nearing the planet, General Veers used short-range landing barges to deploy a wave of AT-ATs to clear the way for Imperial ground troops.



The AT-AT's heavy armour and fearsome armament made them virtually unstoppable, so it was a standard Imperial tactic for them to lead into battle. On Hoth, however, the AT-ATs had another purpose, and Veers himself directed their attack on the main generators that powered the Rebel energy shield. Luke Skywalker, barely recovered from injuries inflicted by a wampa ice creature, led Rogue Squadron's snowspeeders in a desperate action against the lumbering walkers. They succeeded in downing two, gaining vital moments. But faced with the determination of General Veers, the Rebels did well to evacuate Echo Base before it was overrun. Veers had once again confirmed his reputation as a great strategist.

AT-AT: IMPERIAL ALL TERRAIN TRANSPORT WALKER

Type
Walker

Affiliation
Empire

Manufacturer
Kuat Drive Yards

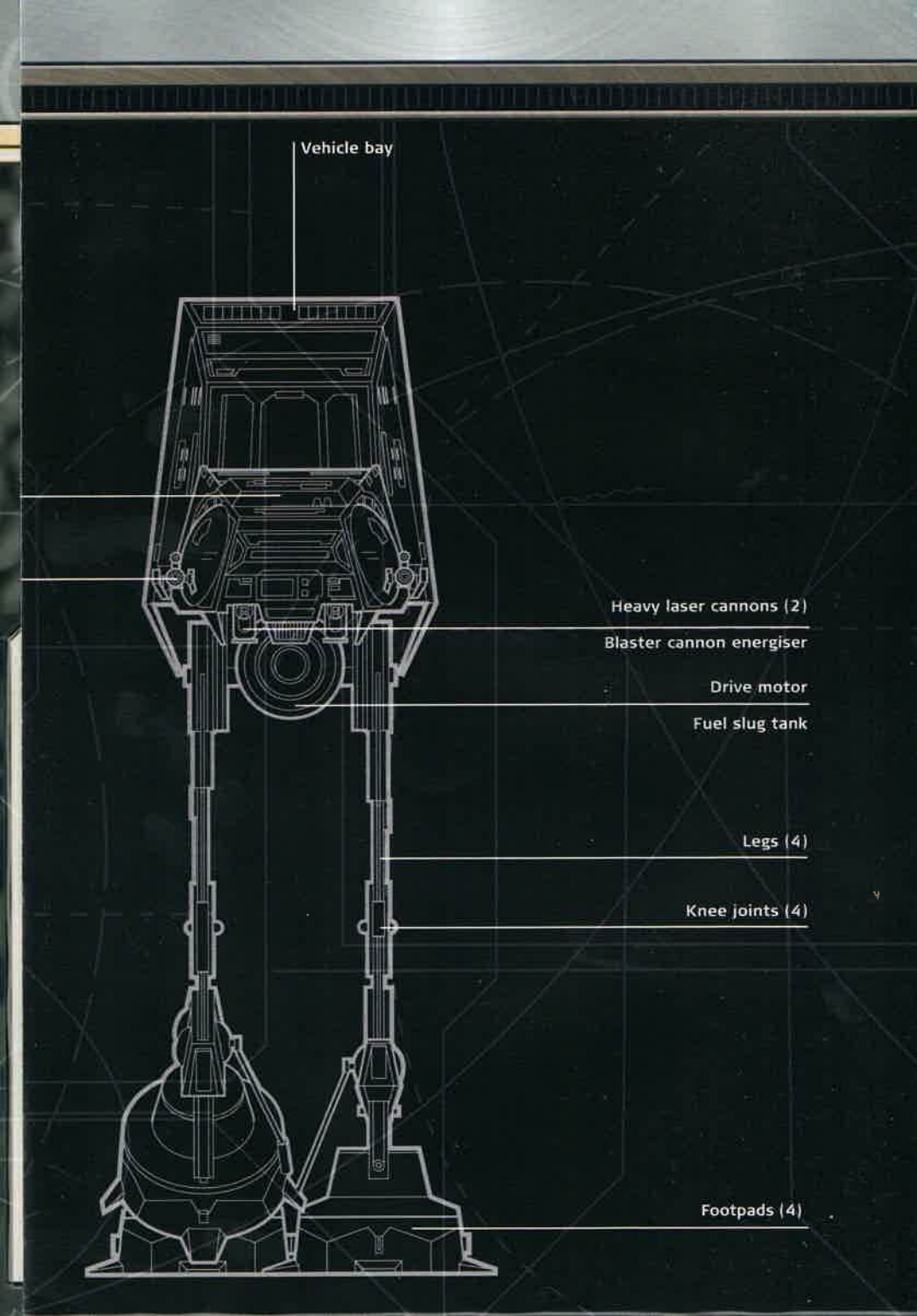
Specifications
Height: 15.5 metres
Speed: 60 km/h

Sensor array

Medium blasters (2)

Defence and armament
The AT-AT perfectly encapsulated the Imperial philosophy. The performance of the vehicle was considered less important than the terror that it could inspire among those who opposed the Empire. Even though the complex mechanism of the four legs required constant attention, this alarming machine was a true cross-country vehicle that was able to make its way over the majority of obstacles if it took them slowly enough.

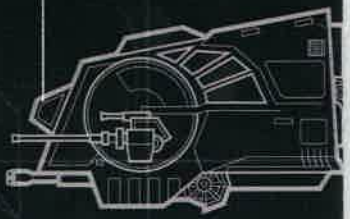
STAR WARS


Vehicle bay
Heavy laser cannons (2)
Blaster cannon energiser
Drive motor
Fuel slug tank
Legs (4)
Knee joints (4)
Footpads (4)

AT-AT walkers were often modified to suit specific environments in which they operated. Those deployed on Hoth were fitted with additional insulation.

Troop sectio

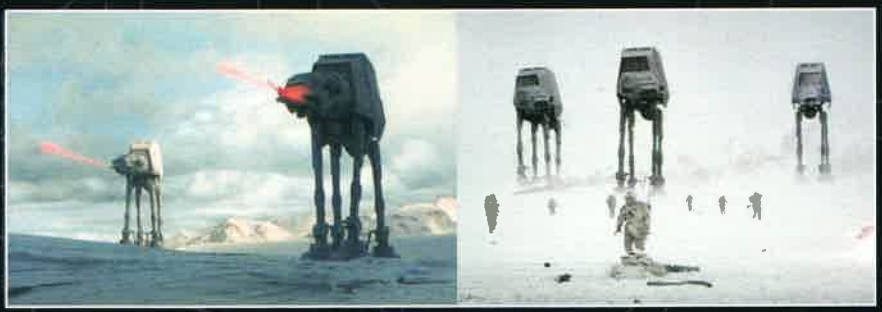
Command viewpoint

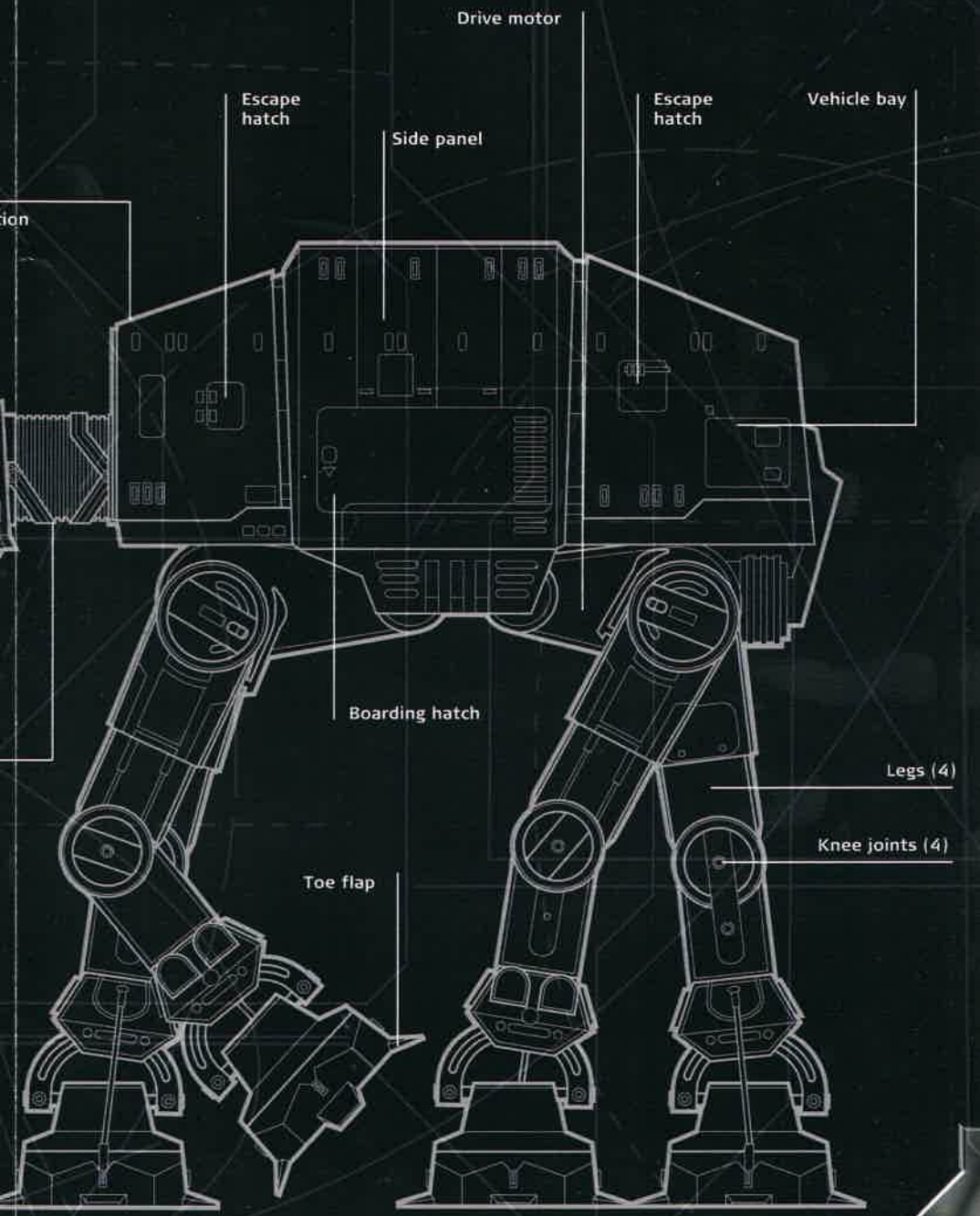


Equipment

The armoured hull of the AT-AT is large enough to accommodate five Imperial speeder bikes and up to 40 soldiers. The space can be reconfigured to carry two AT-STs, which must, however, be partly dismantled to fit inside.

Flexible armoured tunnel (for cockpit access)




Drive motor
Escape hatch
Side panel
Escape hatch
Vehicle bay
ion
Boarding hatch
Legs (4)
Knee joints (4)
Toe flap

AT-AT PILOTS
MORE THAN JUST DRIVERS

In an Empire where arrogance seemed positively encouraged, it took a great deal for a cadre of troops to be noted for just that trait. AT-AT pilots demonstrated an assumed superiority over even their fellow Imperial soldiers that was quite remarkable.

AT-AT pilots worked in pairs. Highly trained, regularly drilled in simulations and in actual battlefield training, one acted as gunner and the other as driver, though no one pilot specialised in either role.

In Command

As was the case with TIE pilots, training for those who controlled the quadruped behemoths was exacting. The harsh selection process was one thing that led the AT-AT pilots to assume superiority over the troops they transported or the foes they crushed. The pilots' elevated position above the battlefield, the devastating weapons at their command, and the heavy armour that they sheltered behind all helped to breed near-insufferable arrogance.

Equipment

AT-AT pilots worked in a pressurised command cabin, unlike the TIE pilots whose equipment theirs resembled. However, they still wore their life support systems, sealed helmets, survival gear and sidearm as a matter of course. This was partly because the cabin was not temperature controlled, but it was also in case the cabin was ever breached. In the event of them having to abandon their walker, all AT-AT pilots were drilled and able combat troops.

Empire and Rebel

During the filming of *The Empire Strikes Back*, actor Ian Liston played both a snowspeeder pilot and one of the AT-AT pilots against whom his Rebel character was flying; a definite case of split personality!

PROFILE

Species
Human

Sex
Male

Height
1.83 metres

Weapon
Blaster pistol (BlasTech DT-12)

Affiliation
Empire

CORUSCANT

WELCOME TO DEX'S DINER

Although located near the Senate district, Coco Town is a poor area. Too close to the shadows of the undercity, the haunt of dockworkers and other labourers, the district still harbours surprises. Dex's Diner was one such place.

The jewel of the galaxy, Coruscant, world of worlds, can offer much. However, to those seeking information, it can sometimes seem to offer everything but deliver little. To those who trade in information, or those who seek what cannot be found through more traditional sources, a good informant can make all the difference.

Gaining A Reputation

Such individuals are found in unlikely places, and Dex's Diner was a very unlikely place indeed. Modelled after the Med'soto style of Coruscant's golden age, rumour had it that this grease-spotted establishment sat on secret repulsorlift engines, ready to whisk it away from danger.

There were a lot of rumours surrounding the diner, not least of which was that the proprietor added addictive compounds to the food to keep customers coming back. This was not (entirely) true. People came back to Dex's because it served good, solid, honest food at reasonable prices – juri juice, ardeer and sliders, not to mention Gartro eggs and nerfsteaks.

Folks also came to Dex's because of the staff. The droid WA-7 did her job efficiently, but the real favourite – when not duelling for dominance of the diner with the jealous WA-7 – was human waitress Hermione Bagwa. Finally, of course, there was the infamous proprietor, Dexter Jettster himself. Dex was quite a cook, personally travelling far and wide in search of particular ingredients, even during the chaos of the Clone Wars.

Colourful Character

However, it was information, not food that usually drew Obi-Wan Kenobi to the diner. Dex was an old friend of both Kenobi and his former Jedi master, Qui-Gon Jinn. Kenobi first met Dex on Ord Sigatt, a rough Outer Rim mining world. Back then, Obi-Wan had been just a Padawan, while the tough, experienced

When Obi-Wan found the allegedly all-encompassing Jedi libraries were lacking information he needed, he often turned to Dex.

Hermione Bagwa

Hermione was played by actress Susie Porter, who also provided the voice for WA-7. Dexter was voiced by Ronald Falk. Although Falk was on set to work with Ewan McGregor, playing Obi-Wan Kenobi, Dexter is an otherwise digital creation!

Besalisk owned the local bar. Dexter took a shine to the young and naïve Obi-Wan, and the two got on well, despite the fact that the bar was used as a front for a gunrunning operation.

A Risky Business

Their paths would cross more often when Dexter settled in the galactic capital. The one-time bar owner had retired from his more dangerous occupations and was looking for a more respectable opportunity on Coruscant when he had the chance to buy the diner from Kenobi's friends Didi and his adopted daughter, Astri Oddo.

Despite his formidable reputation and appearance, Dex was a compassionate soul. He rescued Hermione from the abject poverty of her former life, offering her the chance to build a better life.

When the Empire took over Coruscant, Dex became one of the Erased – citizens who destroyed all records of themselves and went into hiding to avoid capture by Palpatine's agents. During this time, Dexter helped many others in a similar situation. His diner was destroyed when he fled, but was later rebuilt and run by none other than an older Hermione Bagwa.

MARCH 1979: LOCATION NORWAY

Live-action sequences for the Battle of Hoth were filmed on the Hardangerjøkulen Glacier near Finse in Norway. In the depths of an Arctic winter, the crew experienced at first hand the harshness of sub-zero conditions like those the Rebels were supposed to be enduring in Echo Base.

In a howling Norwegian blizzard, actor Mark Hamill struggled through deep snowdrifts. He was back playing Luke Skywalker in the second *Star Wars* movie, sporting recent, real injuries of his own that added unintended realism to his performance. The director, camera and crew were huddled in the doorway of the ski lodge that served as the company headquarters.

The improvised shoot was an attempt to keep filming of *The Empire Strikes Back* on schedule, despite one of the worst winters the area had experienced. This spirit of improvisation was typical of the effort required to capture the Hoth scenes.

Most of the sequences were shot on the Hardangerjøkulen Glacier, some six kilometres from the crew's base. The extras used to play the Rebel soldiers were members of a ski rescue team, their services secured thanks to a generous donation to the Norwegian Red Cross. It was so cold that Harrison Ford famously once arrived on location riding inside the engine compartment of a snowplough – the only vehicle able to reach the ski lodge!

Ingenious Solutions

The original plan by executive producer George Lucas and his team at ILM was to film the AT-AT walkers separately and then composite them onto the live-

The cold caused many problems, as director Irvin Kershner remembers: '...the tauntaun froze up. We couldn't get the smoke to come out of the nose, and we couldn't get the movements right because the thing froze. George [had] said, "Remember, nothing's gonna work." He meant the special effects on the set, and he was right. The first shot of the whole film didn't work.'

action footage that had been shot on location in Norway. This proved impossibly unsatisfactory in the end. Instead, models were used, filmed on miniature sets with glass backdrops painted by Mike Pangrazio. Too much snow was a problem for the film crews in Norway, but creating an artificial snow that could be used for filming on the fantastic model sets at Industrial Light & Magic required an imaginative combination of fine-grain bicarbonate of soda mixed with microscopic glass bubbles.

Although *Star Wars* represented cutting-edge special-effects technology, the AT-ATs were brought to life using stop-motion animation – a technique dating back to classics such as *King Kong* (1933). Posable models were shot one or two frames at a time, then moved almost imperceptibly before being photographed again, taking hours of painstaking work to get mere seconds of footage. Animator Phil Tippet recalled the process: 'We would come in to work at three in the afternoon and be ready to shoot by nine at night. It took forever, and we usually didn't leave until eight the next morning.'

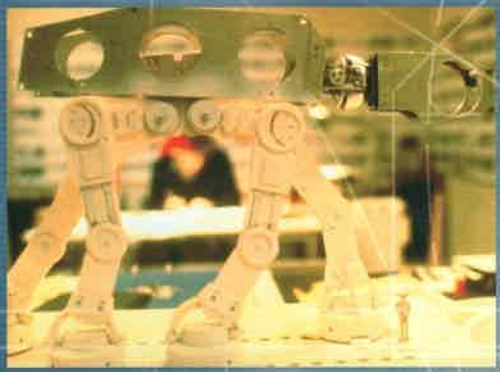
AT-AT MODELS
BRINGING AN IDEA TO LIFE

CREATION OF THE AT-AT

1 Details that had to be seen working included the heavy laser cannons and the medium blaster turrets on either side of the cockpit.

2 Various posable models of the walkers were constructed by ILM. Each had to be jointed to allow the movements that would be seen on screen.

5 A painted panoramic background inserted behind the model filled the field of view of the camera and gave a sense of depth.



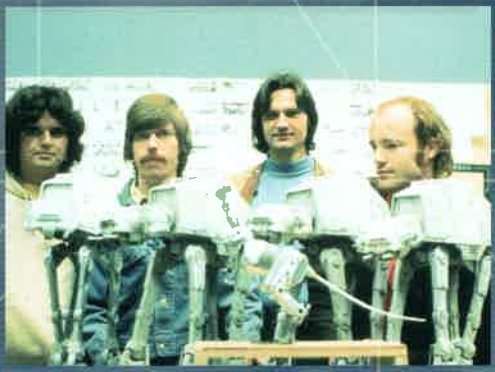
6 The models were based on an adjustable armature. The basic structure is visible in this shot before painting and the addition of the body.

The mighty AT-AT was a formidable assault vehicle, supposed to stand over 15 metres tall. Bringing a squad of them to life, using the stop-motion technique of posing models for the movements from frame to frame, presented a considerable challenge for the ILM team.

3 The 'elephant walkers' were constructed in various sizes. Designed to be seen in long shots, the smallest models measured 2 x 5 x 6cm.

4 Medium-scale posable maquettes for the majority of the stop-motion filming were developed by ILM's model animator, Jon Berg.

7 The largest of the AT-AT models had legs that measured 61 x 163 x 107cm, which were used to film close-ups of the crash scene.



8 The team responsible for bringing the walkers to life (from left to right): Tom St. Amand, Doug Beswick, Jon Berg, Phil Tippett.

1 IN EARLY DRAFTS OF THE SCREENPLAY FOR EPISODE II, DEXTER WAS MARRIED. WHO WAS HIS WIFE?

2 WHICH CELEBRATED SCIENCE-FICTION NOVEL HELPED TO INSPIRE THE AT-AT?

3 WHICH OTHER GEORGE LUCAS FILM IS RECALLED BY THE DESIGN OF DEX'S DINER?

ANSWERS:

1 Preliminary notes indicated that Dexter and Hermione were married, but that original idea was dropped in later versions of the script.

2 According to George Lucas, the AT-AT was inspired by the tripod war machines described in *The War Of The Worlds* by H. G. Wells. The design was also inspired by an elephant (hence the nickname 'elephant walker') and the loading cranes in the docks of West Oakland.

3 Dex's Diner is a link between the *Star Wars* universe and the American roadside restaurants of the 1950s. Its design recalls Mel's Drive-In from *American Graffiti* (George Lucas, 1973).

B

Barc speeder

Vehicle
Episode III

Manufactured by Aratech Repulsor Company, who will later make speeder bikes for the Empire, the Biker Advanced Recon Commando speeder is designed for armed reconnaissance and light escort duties. It is flown by ARC troopers fighting for the Republic in the Clone Wars and even by some Jedi commanders.

Bear Clan

Organisation
Episode II

Children coming to the Jedi Temple on Coruscant are placed in groups of around 20 younglings at approximately the same developmental stage, typically resulting in ages ranging from four to eight years. There are around 10 or so clans in the Temple at any one time. Obi-Wan met the Bear Clan when he sought Master Yoda's help in tracking down the 'lost' world of Kamino.

Beedo, Aldar

Character
Episode I

Despite appearing in the Boonta Eve Classic podrace, Aldar Beedo never claimed to be a racer. In fact, he was an assassin, hired by Wan Sandage to kill his rival, Sebulba. Beedo failed to do this, but did come in third in the race!

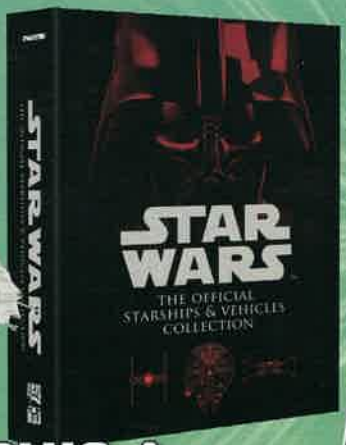
Bespin

Planet
Episodes V & VI

A gas giant some 118,000 kilometres in diameter, Bespin would never have been colonised, much less fought over, but for the unique atmospheric conditions that mean it naturally produces spin-sealed Tibanna gas – a vital component in blaster weapon manufacture. The planet's clouds are dotted with floating mining operations, most famous of which is Cloud City.

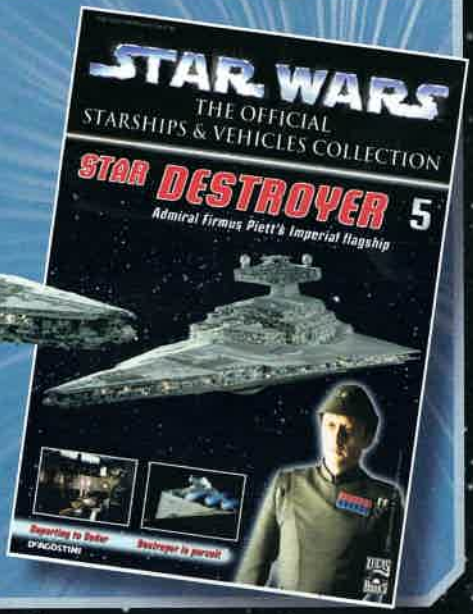
IN THIS ISSUE

WITH ISSUE 4: THE AT-AT



PLUS A FREE BINDER

IN YOUR NEXT ISSUE



WITH ISSUE 5: STAR DESTROYER